

THE BEAR FESTIVAL

300

warm, and very great care is taken not to allow a single drop even to fall upon the ground. If one drop should be spilt, dire vengeance would be taken by the gods. This is the first part of the festival.

I am very happy to say that the Government authorities have at length forbidden the people to kill the cub by strangling, so that the ceremony is now more humane and in some other ways modified. No doubt the whole thing will be quite a custom of the past in another ten or fifteen years.

My informant continued: "As soon as the cub is dead, a passage way is made into the hut by breaking down the east-end window, and he is carried in. Here he is immediately skinned right down to one inch or so from his nose point, and then beheaded. The skin is left attached to the head. This is placed upon a mat called 'Fetish Floor,' the fetish being the head itself. The nose is placed so as to face the fire. Dried fish is nicely chopped up and made into little bundles called 'bundles placed under the chin.' Then delicious strings of millet dumplings are threaded, which are called "titbit bundles." These are very good and are placed beside the fish."

The above named things are placed close under the animal's snout, not to eat, indeed, but ready for him to carry off to the mountains to make a feast, of which he partakes with his parent bears. While all this has been going on, some of the flesh has been boiled and a good soup made in large cauldrons hanging over the fires on the hearth. A moustache-lifter is also placed by the cub's nose, even when it is a female. Chestnuts, walnuts, and sometimes Japanese sweets used also to be given to the guests when I first put in an appearance among them.

"Then," my friend added, "when the old men have placed their crowns on their heads, they dance, and, the head of the divine cub having been nicely arranged and many fetishes presented to him, he is given some